



MAY 21 2001

TO: All NASA Employees

FROM: A/Administrator

SUBJECT: "It Can't Happen to Me"

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reported a startling statistic--in 2000, according to their estimates, nearly one out of every 10 U.S. residents received treatment in a hospital emergency room (ER).

From their estimates, the CDC data showed that 93.6 percent of the injuries were the result of accidents--this translates into about 29 million injuries that could have been prevented. Seven million people were treated for falls, 5.6 million because they were hit by something, and 5.4 million were treated for transportation-related accidents. Overexertion sent 3.2 million to the ER, and cuts/pierces/stabs accounted for another 2.4 million visits. Dog bites, fire, poisoning, stings, and machinery accidents injured hundreds of thousands more.

Everyone thinks "It can't happen to me," but the odds of injury to you or a loved one are surprisingly high. Each of us needs to avoid hazards and unsafe behaviors, at work and especially at home. NASA has established a goal of zero mishaps in the workplace and I encourage you to establish the same goal for yourself and your family.

Basic awareness and simple safety precautions can keep you out of the ER.

- Falls injured the most people. When the floor or sidewalk is wet or uneven, watch your footing. On stairs, always use the handrail. Note--slips, trips, and falls are also NASA's most common mishaps.
- Being hit by things was next. Basic common sense can keep you safe here. Watch where you're going and what you're doing. Be careful when using tools, doing home improvement tasks, lifting and carrying objects, and playing sports.
- Transportation-related accidents were a close third. On foot and on bike, be cautious and aware of traffic. When driving, consider what other drivers or pedestrians (or children) might do and be prepared. Don't allow yourself to be distracted and buckle up--safety belts will cut in half the likelihood of fatality in automobile accidents. Know and follow all the safety rules if you are driving, boating, or flying.

Most importantly, think about what you're going to do. Do some mental hazard analyses when planning activities, both on and off the job. Ask yourself "What could go wrong?" and identify the precautions you should take to avoid an accident. Simply thinking before acting could save your life or the lives of those you love. This may sound like trivial advice, especially to the well-educated members of the NASA workforce, but remember, one in 10 U.S. residents ended up in the ER last year. Make sure you are not among the unfortunate.

Please have a safe summer.

Daniel S. Goldin